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Book Notices.

"My Courtship and its Consequences." By Henry Wikoff. J. C. DERBY. New York: 1855.

WE presume there will be a very great diversity of opinion with regard to the merits of this book. We have been much and favorably disappointed in it ourselves, finding more talent and more evidence of candor than we had expected. There is a naïveté in the way of telling the story which is perfectly unique,—and, we may say also, perfectly unaccountable in a narration of this kind. Not even the least trifle is kept back or discolored, and whatever occurs to the author is given to the world with the thoughtlessness of a child. And this not only in his own affairs, but in whatever comes in for his comments in an accidental way. So, in speaking of Leslie, the artist, he informs us with much complacency, that "for many years past he has been esteemed in England as one of the first artists of the epoch, and worthy to rank with Reynolds or West. His pictures are sought after by the English nobility with the greatest avidity." He criticises with the most perfect assurance everything and everybody,—plunges into society, and coolly tells you what place in the admiration of the world Lord So and So and Mr. — must have.—

"By way of diverting my mind somewhat from late events, I went, on the evening of Miss Gamble's departure, to a splendid banquet given by my spirited countryman, Mr. George Peabody, in honor of the American exhibitors at the Crystal Palace, in 1851. A number of distinguished persons, both American and English, were assembled on this festive occasion. The American Minister, Hon. A. Lawrence; Lord Granville; Sir Henry Bulwer; Hon. R. J. Walker, &c., &c., occupied prominent places to the right and left of our hospitable host. Amid the fine oratory of the evening I momentarily forgot the anxieties and vicissitudes of my protracted courtship. It was a relief to have something else to think of for an hour or so. The rhetorical part of our entertainment began by a most felicitous speech from F. P. Corbin, Esq., of Virginia. His perfect self-possession, the ease and elegance of his delivery, to say nothing of the substantial merits of the discourse itself, rendered it almost incredible, which I knew to be the fact, that this was the first occasion on which this accomplished gentleman had ever addressed a public assembly. It is known that a 'bit of blood' is sure to tell on the turf, and it is no less true that your thorough-bred man never fails to reach his level, be the ordeal what it may. The American Minister acquitted himself as usual, in the happiest manner. I never met an instance where the charm of a fine manner told so powerfully as in the case of the Hon. A. Lawrence in England, and in his career the *suaviter in modo* was always admirably sustained by the *fortiter in re*. Lord Granville was neat, finished, and unaffected in his remarks as always. The most elaborate effort of the evening was that of Sir Henry Bulwer; there was nothing in the discourse, or the orator, wanting to make the effect complete. The logic, wit, pathos, and diction of the one was brilliantly set off by the grace, animation, and skillful intonations of the other. Table oratory is an art of itself, and Sir H. Bulwer is one of its most accomplished masters."

We suppose there will be some doubt that his motives in paying his addresses to Miss Gamble were entirely affectional. The introduction seems to settle this—

"Before beginning the narration of my Colebs' Adventures in Search of a Wife, I may as well say a word of my first acquaintance with the fair object of my pursuit. It dates as far back, I am sorry for both of us to say, as eighteen years ago. On setting out on my European travels, in 1834, I received from Mr. Gilbert Robertson, the British Consul at Philadelphia, whom I had known from my boyhood, several letters of introduction, and one of them, I observed, was addressed to Mr. James Dunlop, of Russel Square, London. After making a tour of France and Italy, I reached England in the spring of 1835, and lost no time in presenting my letters, and the one in question among the rest. I thus made the acquaintance of a charming and interesting family. Mr. Dunlop was a Scotch gentleman, who had amassed a considerable fortune in the tobacco trade with America. His wife was an American lady, and they had an only son, James, of weak intellect but amiable disposition. A fourth member of this pleasant circle, Miss Gamble, was a niece of Mrs. Dunlop, who had left her home in the United States some years previous, to be adopted by her aunt, though she had been born in England, from the accident of her parents travelling there at that moment. My acquaintance with these amiable persons grew rapidly; and during the years 1836-7, at which period I was attached to the American Legation in London, I was in the constant habit of frequenting their house, both in town and country. The mild character of Mr. Dunlop, and the

cheerful disposition of his wife, inspired me with great regard; nor was it possible to remain wholly indifferent to the many attractions of their accomplished niece. To personal beauty of no ordinary kind, Miss Gamble added a very superior and highly-cultivated intellect, graceful manners, and a sprightly temper, which rendered her society at all times very seductive. If it is wondered at that I stood proof against so many charms, then at their culminating point, and which few did who dared to confront them, I would not have it set down either to my insensibility, or want of due appreciation. The fact was, that I had not long before escaped from the tiresome discipline of a protracted University career. Having come into the control of an ample fortune, I felt disposed, instead of settling prematurely down in life, rather to carry out the ardent dream of my youth, and to devote some years to a wide tour of Europe. It will excite the incredulity of none who knew this engaging person at the time I am speaking of, to say that my intimate acquaintance with her left upon my mind impressions so deep and pleasing as to preserve them unimpaired through long succeeding years."

The course of true love does not run smooth with the poor fellow, Miss G. flirting in the most unmerciful manner, and with the most unlovely severity has him consigned to prison to cool off his passion.

The charge of abduction seems to be totally a fabrication, so far as any forcible attempt was concerned, as the reader will see by the conclusion of the adventure—

"We were both of us in high spirits, and I ordered the valet, who could not make head or tail of what was going on, to prepare supper, of which Miss Gamble and I partook gaily.

"But I played you a trick that you are not aware of," she remarked, in great glee.

"What was that?"

"Why, when you were out of the room I wrote on a piece of paper that I was detained here, and would give a thousand francs to any one who would come to my relief, and then threw it out of the window."

"I refused to credit this, but Mary told me it was true.

"You are a dangerous woman to joke with, I see, for you stop at nothing."

"You are mistaken," she said, archly, "for I could have gone further."

"How so?"

"Isn't there a family overhead, for I distinctly heard a woman's foot?"

"Yes, a banker occupies the upper part of the palace."

"Well, then, if I and Mary had set to screaming, you would have been obliged to run."

"True enough—I should have been off as fast as my legs could carry me. But, *entre nous*, I wondered you didn't come out when the agent called to see me in the early part of the evening."

"She smiled without replying."

"Between eight and nine o'clock the agent of the apartments, *Mr. Pescio*, had called, and I was talking with him for near half an hour. If Miss Gamble had not liked the diversion going on, nothing prevented her coming forward to claim his interference. We were kept waiting a long while to get a carriage, but none could be found. Before going I looked about the room to see that nothing was left behind, when I came across a small leather bag.

"What's this?" I asked.

"It's Mary's," said Miss Gamble.

"What does it contain?" I pursued.

"Only odds and ends that Mary always carries with her."

"It was asserted afterwards that Mary had brought Miss Gamble's night clothes in it; but I do not believe this, as neither Miss Gamble nor myself had ever sent such an order. As I was rummaging about, I thought of my pistols that I had put, when I first entered the room, on the top of a high piece of furniture."

"Bless my soul!" I exclaimed, "I totally forgot to shoot myself."

"What do you mean?" demanded Miss Gamble. "I took down the pistols and related to her the *rusé* I had contemplated, but had quite forgotten."

"It will do for another time," she replied, smiling. "It was considerably after midnight when we started off on foot to return to Miss Gamble's hotel. Pietro led the way, and as the streets were quite deserted, I walked with my arm affectionately thrown round Miss Gamble. I mention this simply to show the loving mood we were in. Mary accompanied us. When we had walked a short distance Miss Gamble remarked—

"What's the use of going back to my hotel to-night?"

"What do you propose, then?" I asked, in some surprise.

"Let us go somewhere else, and return in the morning."

"As you please," I replied; "but do you wish me to go along with you?"

"Of course, I do; tell your servant there to stop at the nearest hotel."

"I gave the order, and directly Pietro knocked at the door of a house which he said was the 'Iron Crown Hotel.' We were admitted instantly. I asked if they had rooms, and we were shown to a couple of bedrooms adjoining each other. Miss Gamble chose one, and I took the other. I chatted with her for a short time before retiring, and we agreed to be up and off at nine in the morning. I saluted her cordially when I bid her

good-night. I slept soundly, and was woke up by Mary knocking at my door by order of her mistress."

On the whole it is an uncommon book in many respects, and is well published.

"Ruth Hall," a Domestic Tale of the Present Time. By Fanny Fern. Mason, Bros., New York, 1855.

Who Fanny Fern is we don't know, and as little care. *Ruth Hall* is a well-told story, with which, as a story, we have no fault to find; but it nevertheless opens some grave veins of thought. Autobiographical to a certain extent it most certainly is—it has too many bursts of feeling, originating in genuine suffering, to leave us in any doubt of that—but how far it is so, it is not easy to say. But there is too much that is bitter in it to please us entirely. The concluding passage of the preface will serve as a text for many grave homilies in as many different moods:—

"Still I cherish the hope, that somewhere in the length and breadth of the land, it may force into a flame in some tried heart, the fading embers of hope well nigh extinguished by wintry fortune and summer friends."

We don't like the fling in those last few words; there is an acerbity in them, that man, and still more woman, who has suffered, should have lost under suffering. What does it profit one to have been disciplined, if the discipline bring not the spirit of humility and gentleness?

So you enter into the book—the narration of the existence of a sensitive, talented girl and woman, who passes through the long ordeal of life, and, deserted by all friends, achieves her dependence by her own exertions. The portrait of Ruth's family is painful from its cold regards, its utter want of the tenderness which childhood ought to mingle recollections in its associations. It may be all true, but a mind less inclined to dwell on the indignities it had received would have greatly veiled the wrong, and dwelt more tenderly on that which we should love. This bitterness is the prevalent tone of the work, the heroine's married life forming almost the only oasis in the dry desert—a desert watered in vain by tears. We wish that with all the truth and beauty of the book, theread been more of the love of the Beautiful manifested in it. Ah! Fanny Fern, Fanny Fern, you have a lesson to learn yet, if *Ruth Hall* is your life's history.

Yet, lest we, too, commit the fault we deprecate, let us give the book its due. It really is an admirable thing, and the children's characters in particular are exquisitely drawn, perhaps idealized; but that is no matter, for there is no beauty that is not true. We give a single extract:—

"Time for papa to come," said little Daisy, seating herself on the low door-steps; the sun had crept way round to the big apple tree; and Daisy shook back her hair, and settling her little elbows on her knees, sat with her chin in her palms, dreamily watching the shifting clouds. A butterfly alights on a blade of grass near her; Daisy springs up, her long hair floating like a veil about her shoulders, and her tiny feet scarce bending the clover blossoms, and tiptoes carefully along in pursuit.

"He's gone, Daisy, but never mind; like many other coveted treasures, he would lose his brilliancy, if caught. Daisy has found something else; she closes her hand over it, and returns to her old watch-post on the door steps. She seats herself again, and losing her tiny hold, out creeps a great busy caterpillar. Daisy places him carefully on the back of her little blue-veined hand, and he commences his travels up the polished arm to the little round shoulder. When he reaches the lace sleeve, Daisy's laugh rings out like a robin call, then she puts him back, to travel the same smooth road again.

"Oh, Daisy! Daisy," said Ruth, stepping up behind her, "What an ugly plaything, put him down, do, darling, I cannot bear to see him on your arm."

"Why, God made him," said little Daisy, with her sweet upturned eyes of Ruth.

"True, darling," said Fanny in a hurried whisper, kissing the child's brow with a stung feeling of awe; "keep him, Daisy, if you like."

There are some most painful chapters in the book, enough perhaps, if they were autobiographical, to make us excuse all the bitterness we complained of, yet none the more satisfying us with it.